



## MEDIA INFORMATION

# FAILURE

Greg Edwards' and Ken Andrews' collective eyes light up as they discuss one of their favorite films, an animated French flick made in 1973 that they say won the Grand Prix Award at Cannes that year. The plot is elaborately space-age and allegorical — something about earthlings surviving an alien civilization after earth is destroyed — but Andrews and Edwards make it sound DeMille-ian in scope, design and drama. The film is called *Fantastic Planet*; no coincidence that Failure's new album — itself stylish, dramatic and sprawling — checks in with the very same title.

"That film and others we watched while recording were far more influential than any music we were listening to at the time," says Andrews, recalling that Edwards hung a framed promotional poster of the film in the control room to watch over the proceedings. "It was there winking at us the whole while," Edwards says. "I've been obsessed with that film since 1989."

*Fantastic Planet* — their third album — was another obsession for Edwards and Andrews, as well as their new, full-time, drummer Kellii Scott. With a bunch of new equipment and a lot of great ideas, Failure holed up in a rented house in an undisclosed SoCal location to record the follow-up to '94's inspired *Magnified*. What they emerged with surprised even themselves. *Fantastic Planet* is a stunning, hyper-ambitious album that witnesses the band growing in every direction at once.

The Failure experiment originally began in the summer of 1990. Guitarist/vocalist Ken Andrews had been testing the 4-track in his LA home when he met original drummer Robert Gauss, a like-

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minded sonic adventurer who suggested he and Andrews capitalize on their mutual interests. The two recruited bass player Greg Edwards (who was tinkering on his own 4-track at the time), honed their collective craft in LA clubs as a trio, and signed a deal with Slash Records a year after forming.

The band's first album, *Comfort*, was the product of a confusing and frustrating time in the studio with Steve Albini. Before writing commenced for the second album, Gauss left the band under mutual agreement.

This left Andrews and Edwards on their own, searching for their mettle as songwriters. And though they felt "uncomfortable" about the demo to studio transition/translation, *Magnified*, their second LP, was a lot closer to their vision of what they wanted to do in the studio. Now, with *Fantastic Planet*, they've taken the lessons learned from experience and bypassed that transition altogether, by writing, rehearsing, recording and mixing one song at a time in their own studio.

While recording the 17 songs for the album, the band recalls that "no two tracks evolved in the same way. 'Heliotropic,' [a six-minute exercise in creative atmospherics] took forever — two weeks to make — and was the most elaborate material we had ever attempted." On the other hand, a song like "Pillowhead" came out one afternoon from an aggressive, acoustic guitar/drum jam. The evocative "Solaris" features chorus lyrics from "a weird synopsis" of another futuristic film, this one by the Russian filmmaker Tarkovsky (based on a book by Stanislaw Lem).

In addition to writing the songs as they recorded, Andrews and Edwards made a habit of switching off on their instruments, allowing Failure to explore even further the possibilities of different writing methods. Typically, Andrews composed the vocal melodies, while Edwards moved to the fore lyrically. Having a full-time committed drummer in Kellii Scott also helped the two focus in on the songwriting and producing.

To help execute their eclectic expressions live, the band added a second guitar player, Troy Van Leeuwen, after making the record. Now, with Van Leeuwen and drummer Scott as permanent members, Failure is no longer just Andrews and Edwards surrounded by a rotating cast of supporting players. Andrews: "The live show is finally starting to become what we've always hoped it could be. Everyone is holding their own and Troy has especially made an important difference in the way we go about translating our sound live."



And the already crushing material on *Fantastic Planet* should impress live. Tracks like "Sergeant Politeness" and "Pitiful" rage with majestic, Nirvana-esque melodies; the opener, "Saturday Saviour," breezes along with a heavy hummability; while "Another Space Song," "Stuck On You" and "Daylight" exhibit a quirkier, craftier side to the band we haven't seen before. Recorded in isolation, self-produced and ranging in tone from heavy ambient to dizzying guitar-based pop and abrasive noise, Failure comes through in a big way, despite the fact the odds seemed stacked against them.

"The outlook for the album was grim even while we were making it," asserts Edwards about their label's confusing on again/off again deals with parent companies, "but it turned out by far to be the album we're most happy with."

Fans who remember fondly Failure's *Comfort* and *Magnified* may wonder why the band took so long to provide a closing installment to their first trilogy (label/ legal problems kept the album, which was actually completed in July of '95, from even being scheduled for release for almost a year). During the layover, both Andrews and Edwards, with the help of Paul D'Amour of Tool, took some time to record *The Replicants*, an album of heavy pop covers from the '70s and '80s. Strangely enough, due to label uncertainty, that record which was made after the *Fantastic Planet* sessions, came out close to a year earlier. "The *Replicants* idea started out as a demo, really, just to test out our new equipment," says Andrews, "but Tool's A&R guy, Matt Marshall, heard it and got really interested. So we recorded more songs and Zoo released it as an album." In the interim, Andrews also produced two other albums: Molly McGuire's *Lime* on Epic, and Blinker the Star's *A Bourgeois Kitten* for A&M.

Of course, Failure's heart lies with its own material, and *Fantastic Planet* is undeniably Failure, from concept to execution to lasting impression. Sonically, it's the heaviest record the band's ever made and far and away the most consistently compelling.

"Each time you listen to it, your whole take on it will change," says Edwards. "The songs that you gravitate towards change over time. I think making the album feel like a journey was definitely a goal we achieved."